



City of Scottsdale
McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 17, 2018 – 5:00 p.m.
Florence Ely Nelson Desert Park
8950 E. Pinnacle Peak Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85255

Present: Chairperson Bob Frost, Vice-Chair Mike Milillo, Commissioners Bobby Alpert, Steve Dodd, Con Englehorn, Cynthia Wenstrom

Absent: Commissioner Jace McKeighan

Staff Present: Bill Murphy, Community Services Director, Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director, Scott Hamilton, Senior Preserve Planner, Natural Resource Coordinators John Loleit and Robert Graves

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Frost called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Noted as above

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public that wished to speak.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Englehorn moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2017 meeting as submitted. Commission Dodd seconded and the motion carried with a vote of 6-0.

MCDOWELL SONORAN CONSERVANCY UPDATE

Justin Owen, the new Executive Director, introduced himself and advised the Conservancy has a new marketing director. Mr. Owen indicated staff has been actively pushing the Conservancy and Preserve through the media outlets such as Channel 3 and the MMR HOA. The Quarterly steward education event is this weekend as well as the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Royal Air Force Crash in the Preserve, which will include a fly over from a WWII plane.

BUDGET PROCESS

Bill Murphy, Community Service Director, provided a presentation on the costs associated with the Preserve including direct costs, administrative costs, and indirect costs. The presentation included projected costs through FY19/20.

Chairperson Frost asked how the additional costs were calculated. Mr. Murphy indicated it is a result of adding another coordinator and 3 part-time positions on a seasonal basis, as well as other commodities and maintenance.

Kroy Ekblaw, Preserve Director gave a presentation on the updated CIP which highlighted Fraesfield, Granite Mountain and Pima/Dynamite, and the wildlife crossing on Dynamite Road but that would require more funding. Staff is also studying costs for restoration, invasive plant materials, cultural sites, and safety considerations. The presentation included a slide on Wildland Fire Prevention. Staff has done clearing but are still looking at additional improvements. This could be in the \$2 to \$6 million-dollar range when you look at all the aspects associated – restoration, invasive plants/control, protection of cultural sites and wildland fire protection.

Commissioner Alpert asked where the Dynamite crossover is planned. Mr. Ekblaw indicated between 122nd to 128th Streets, where the gooseneck connects to Fraesfield. Commissioner Alpert asked will it go under the road. Mr. Ekblaw noted that was not decided yet but if it was an underpass depending on height, larger animals may not use it. Staff will work with Arizona Game and Fish, Transportation and the County to evaluate the best options. Commissioner Englehorn questioned if a wildlife crossing is necessary. Mr. Hamilton noted that studies are going on now, including a mortality study that was done by Arizona Game and Fish.

Vice-chair Milillo stated that Invasive plants and fire prevention are related and is really important and should have as a high priority. Mr. Ekblaw said staff will be bringing back more details and looking at variations and approaches for this topic. Different stretches of road will require different solutions. He noted that these are not dollars that are guaranteed to be spent and staff will keep the commission up to speed.

Mr. Ekblaw outlined potential parking improvements at Pinnacle Peak Park (PPP) with the State land east of the parking lot. He reviewed the evolution of the neighborhood. To the south a restaurant is in redevelopment as an assisted living facility. In 1998 the Recommended Study Boundary (RSB) included 10 acres of the park site.

Chairperson Frost asked who appointed the task force. Mr. Ekblaw said the City Council did and they reported to the Council. Mr. Ekblaw said that in 2001, 3.1 acres of trust land was acquired with Preserve tax funds.

Chairperson Frost asked if the parking lot was under the auspice of the commission. Mr. Ekblaw indicated there was a relationship and 2012 the parking lot was constructed with Preserve Tax funds. Improvements were paid for by the Preserve tax funds because it is within the recommended boundaries. The park averages over 225,000 visitors per year, similar number as Gateway. Pinnacle Peak Park has 80 parking stalls where Gateway has 380. Staff is looking at the potential of acquiring 2 to 3 acres to bring parking up to 300 and also modification of restrooms and office space and those improvements would all occur within the RSB.

Chairperson Frost noted the proposal is to pay for the improvements with preserve funds.

Commissioner Alpert asked if the improvements would solve the parking problem or enhance it. Mr. Ekblaw noted the visit numbers have been stable over a 7 to 8-year period. The intent is not to increase the overall parking due to the fact that parking on the street would then be banned. Staff is expecting to solve the long term needs of the park.

Commissioner Englehorn asked about the cost for the land. Mr. Ekblaw indicated estimates are up to \$5 million for the entire project including land and improvements.

Commissioner Wenstrom feels we can't keep expanding the parking and is not sure of the value in adding more parking for a 2-mile trail. This topic needs to come back as an action item for the commission.

Vice-chair Milillo feels that this should not be looked at as a part of the Preserve. It is cut off by development. Funds to solve a problem for this site should be through a bond issue. This is a big issue and what is the range of options to be considered including taking this out of the RSB. Is that a possibility? Spending \$5-million doesn't benefit the Preserve in any form.

Chairperson Frost indicated staff and the Parks Commission probably thinks it is a great source of funding, but as a Preserve Commissioner the feeling is there are other need for that money. He asked that staff bring back this item for further discussion.

Commissioner Dodd asked if there are demographics on the users at PPP. Mr. Loleit said it's a huge mix with many locals but in season visitors from all over the country are high users. It is a draw for its views and vistas and it is a short trail and can get it done in a short time.

Mr. Ekblaw said we can address these issues and bring back to the Commission.

Chairperson Frost stated the Commission should take some action tonight on the CIP relative to the long term maintenance and operation in order to present a better picture and to show the City Council a better number on the utilization of funds. He moved to add \$20-million to Preserve maintenance and annuity. Vice-chair Milillo seconded.

Commissioner Englehorn asked where does \$20-million come from and what the purpose is. Chairperson Frost said the Commission's previous examples is given something that won't work. Vice-chair Milillo would like to see figures based on a more conservative interest rate and this deserves more discussion. Chairperson Frost said the purpose of the motion is to be able to give Council a realistic number and \$34 million is not realistic. Mr. Ekblaw recommended reviewing this item again at the next meeting in 2 weeks. The Commission consensus was this was a good idea.

Vice-chair Milillo withdrew the second and Chairperson Frost withdrew the original motion.

GRANITE MOUNTAIN AND FRAESFIELD TRAILHEAD MUMSP

Mr. Ekblaw showed conceptual site plans for the Municipal Use Master Site Plans for Granite Mountain and Fraesfield Trailheads. These plans went before the Development Review Board in November, the Planning Commission in December, and is scheduled to City Council presentation on February 13, 2018. The design will be presented to the Development Review Board in March. The contractor is on board and the plans are unchanged.

Commissioner Wenstrom asked if it was basically a trailhead like Tom's Thumb. Mr. Hamilton indicated it was.

Commissioner Alpert moved to recommend the City Council approve the MUMSP site plans for 11-UP-2017 and 12-UP-2017. Vice-chair Milillo seconded. The motion carried with a vote of 6-0.

STAFF REPORTS

Staff gave updates on the following topics:

- Trails status – Phase 3, southern area
- Trails use.
- Raptor Closure
- Deer Tracking Study
- Trailhead Planning and temporary improvements

REVIEW BYLAWS

No change to the current Bylaws were suggested.

MSPC 2017 ANNUAL REPORT

The Commissioners reviewed the MSPC 2017 Annual Report.

Commissioner Alpert noted the under “Anticipated Key Issues” the dog problem in preserve should be listed as well as future trailhead hosts and E-Bikes.

Commissioner Wenstrom asked how we approach dogs off leash. Mr. Hamilton stated anyone can share information with staff as well as any appropriate departments. If a situation is witnessed you are urged to call 480-312-5000 and make a report.

Commissioner Wenstrom asks who prepares this report. Mr. Ekblaw said staff prepares it from the agendas and minutes and then presents it to the Commission.

Vice-chair Milillo moved to approve the report with changes. Commissioner Englehorn seconded and the motion carried 6-0.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

There were not reports from the Commissioners.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Suggested items include

Phase 3 Trails Plan Refinement
Financial Report/Endowment Update
PPP
E-Bikes

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

As required by the Commission Bylaws, new officers are elected at the first meeting of each calendar year.

Vice-chair Milillo nominated Commissioner Jace McKeighan for the position of Chairperson. Commissioner Alpert nominated Commissioner Cynthia Wenstrom for the position of Chairperson. Commissioner McKeighan was elected by a vote of 5-1.

Vice Chair Alpert nominated Commissioner Cynthia Wenstrom for the position of Vice-chair. Commissioner Wenstrom was elected by a unanimous vote of 6-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved and seconded – Meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Ruth Johnson, Recording Secretary